

LCQ14: Employment of persons with disabilities

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Che-cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (January 23):

Question:

Some groups have relayed to me that the employment support currently provided by the Government for persons with disabilities (PWDs) is inadequate, and quite a number of PWDs have still been unsuccessful in securing employment several years after graduation from tertiary institutions. Moreover, quite a number of PWDs who had secured employment through the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) were dismissed immediately after the end of the nine-month payment period of the government allowance. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows (i) the respective rates of employment, unemployment and underemployment of PWDs, and (ii) the number of PWDs with tertiary education qualifications and their respective rates of employment, unemployment and underemployment, in each of the past five years;
- (2) of the top three government departments with the highest percentages of the number of PWDs in the total number of employees in each of the past five years;
- (3) of the respective numbers and percentages of government job vacancies filled by PWDs who were (i) transferred from other posts in the Government and (ii) appointed through open recruitment processes, in each of the past five years;
- (4) of the respective numbers of PWDs and employers who were provided with employment and recruitment services by the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department, and the number of PWDs who secured employment through such services, in each of the past five years;
- (5) of the total amount of allowance granted under WOPS in each of the past five years to employers who were employing PWDs; the number of PWDs in the past two years who stayed in employment for more than 10 months after securing employment through WOPS;
- (6) of the number of PWDs who underwent productivity assessments and were issued with a Certificate of Assessment on the Degree of Productivity each year since the implementation of the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) regime in May 2011;
- (7) given that a PWD may choose to reach an agreement with an employer under which he accepts the arrangement for undergoing a trial period of employment

of not more than four weeks, and the level of the wage paid by the employer to such an employee during the period must not be lower than 50 per cent of the SMW rate, whether the Government knows, among the PWDs mentioned in (6), the number of those who, based on the assessment results, were entitled to wages at a level higher than 50 per cent of the SMW rate; and

(8) whether the Government will consider, by following the practices in some Mainland provinces and municipalities and overseas countries, taking the lead in introducing an employment quota system for PWDs in government departments?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the relevant bureaux and departments, I provide a consolidated reply to the Member's question as follows:

(1) In accordance with a territory-wide survey conducted throughout 2013 by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) on persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, it was estimated that 13.6 per cent of persons with disabilities aged 15 and above were employed in that year, higher than the rate in 2006-07 (11.8 per cent). Besides, the unemployment rate of this group of persons was 6.0 per cent in 2013, lower than that in 2006-07 (10.5 per cent). As the prevalence rate of persons with disabilities will not change drastically over a short period of time, the C&SD conducts the above survey once every six to seven years. Owing to sample size constraint, information on the corresponding underemployment rate is not available from the survey.

In 2013, there were 43 900 persons with disabilities aged 15 and above holding post-secondary qualifications, of which 34.7 per cent were employed. The corresponding figures in 2006-07 were 22 400 persons and 36.7 per cent. Owing to sample size constraint, information on the unemployment and underemployment rates of persons with disabilities holding post-secondary qualifications is not available from the survey.

(2) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Companies Registry and Drainage Services Department are the top three government departments with the highest rates of employing persons known to have disabilities (excluding colour blindness or defective colour perception) as civil servants in each of the past five years (i.e. from 2013-14 to 2017-18).

(3) There is no requirement for applicants for government jobs to declare their disabilities, if any. The situation of applicants with disabilities is known to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) on the basis of the information available to bureaux/departments (B/Ds) during the recruitment process (e.g. through requests of applicants made to recruiting B/Ds for making special arrangements during selection interview/test having regard to their disabilities). Hence, the figures obtained through the aforesaid channel by the CSB might be lower than the actual figures. According to the data collected from that channel, the number of new recruits known to have disabilities and their percentage in the total number of new recruits in each

of the past five years (i.e. from 2013-14 to 2017-18) are set out below:

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of new recruits known to have disabilities (Note 1)	80	58	83	49	74
Total number of new recruits in the civil service	8 460	7 717	9 854	8 947	12 041
Percentage	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%

The above only covers the figures of new recruits in the civil service. The Government does not collect data about civil servants with disabilities on in-service transfer.

(4) The Labour Department (LD) provides recruitment and employment services for employers and job seekers with disabilities who are suitable for open employment. In the past five years (i.e. from 2014 to 2018), there were respectively 4 560, 5 042, 5 306, 5 614 and 4 939 private organisations offering the LD job vacancies for persons with disabilities. During the same period, there were respectively 2 650, 2 720, 2 790, 2 833 and 2 766 job seekers with disabilities registering with the LD for employment services, whereas the LD recorded 2 464, 2 401, 2 250, 2 203 and 2 219 placements respectively for persons with disabilities.

(5) The LD implements the Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS) to encourage employers to hire job seekers with disabilities and provide them with coaching and support through the provision of an allowance. In the past five years (i.e. from 2014 to 2018), the annual total amounts of allowance payable to eligible employers under the WOPS were \$11.20 million, \$12.22 million, \$12.19 million, \$13.11 million and \$10.82 million respectively. Among the 802 WOPS placements in 2017 (Note 2), there were 263 cases where the employees with disabilities were employed for over 10 months.

According to the information available to the LD, employment contracts under the WOPS were terminated mostly owing to the resignation of employees with disabilities. Dismissal by employers only accounted for a minority of the termination cases, and there was no significant increase in the number of termination cases after the expiry of the allowance period. The main reasons for employees with disabilities to resign were their inability to adapt to the new job, their wish to change to a new working environment and their finding a better job. On the other hand, employers dismissed employees with disabilities mainly because of the latter's performance issues.

(6) Figures on the number of employees with disabilities who completed the productivity assessment under the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) regime with the award of the Certificate of Assessment on the Degree of Productivity of Persons with Disabilities (the certificate) in each of the past five years (i.e. from 2014 to 2018) are set out below:

Year	Number of employees with disabilities
2014	70
2015	79
2016	45
2017	41
2018	31

(7) Where an employee with disabilities has received the productivity assessment under the SMW regime, the employer concerned is required under the Minimum Wage Ordinance to pay the employee a wage no less than the amount determined according to the wage rate commensurate with the degree of productivity stated in the certificate. Among the employees with disabilities mentioned in part (6) above, over 99 per cent were assessed as having productivity of above 50 per cent, i.e. they were entitled to wages at a level higher than 50 per cent of the SMW rate.

(8) At present, the CSB has no plan to set an upper or lower limit for employing persons with disabilities as civil servants. The Government's policy is to ensure that persons with disabilities, like other applicants, enjoy equal opportunities in applying for government jobs by putting in place appropriate measures to facilitate their participation in the recruitment process, and give them an appropriate degree of preference for appointment.

Note 1: Excluding persons who declared to have colour blindness or defective colour perception.

Note 2: As most of the employees with disabilities placed in 2018 are still being employed under the WOPS with employment period less than 10 months, the relevant information for 2018 is not yet available.